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ABSTRACT

Higher education throughout the 1990s and into the early 21st century will be characterized by an increasing concern for serving the educational needs of non-traditional as well as traditional students in the most cost-effective manner. Student retention will continue to be one of the major targets of campus strategic plans. Faculty development programs will become more prevalent and will emerge as a critical dimension of a campus renewal through quality assurance program. Academic leaders will increasingly view faculty development programs as the primary means for assisting professors to understand the characteristics of diverse student populations. Collection and analysis of appropriate data will greatly enhance managerial decisions concerning modifications to the inservice training program for faculty trained as academic counselors, the cornerstone of the two primary stages of academic advisement for a college or university. A well organized and outcomes oriented training program, one component of a comprehensive faculty development program, can do much to improve instructional, academic advisement, and mentoring effectiveness. Such a program sensitizes faculty to the unique qualities and needs of entering freshmen, thus improving their ability to contribute to student retention in an era of increasingly diverse student populations. (ABL)

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DEVELOPING FACULTY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: ONE STEP BEYOND THE ROLE OF ADVISOR

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DEVELOPING FACULTY FOR THE 21st CENTURY: ONE STEP BEYOND THE ROLE OF ADVISOR

Higher education throughout the 1990s and into the early 21st century will be characterized by an increasing concern for serving the educational needs of non-traditional as well as traditional students in the most cost-effective manner. Student retention will continue to be one of the major targets of campus strategic plans. To meet the educational requirements of students with diverse entry-level abilities, backgrounds, and aspirations, a strong emphasis will be placed on personalizing the instructional process for each student. Individualized instructional strategies will become more evident as institutions place high priority on developing and implementing approaches to accommodate students with diverse academic abilities. Technologies, now available to facilitate individualized instruction, will be used increasingly on campuses and at distances to serve learners (Feasley, 1983; Hall, 1991).

Faculty development programs will become more prevalent and will emerge as a critical dimension of a campus renewal through quality assurance program (Bogue, Saunders, 1992). Academic leaders will increasingly view faculty development programs as the primary means for assisting professors to understand the characteristics of diverse student populations and to "discover, try, master and evaluate alternative ways to help each student learn" (Lindquist, 1978). Faculty in-service training programs not only will be concerned with improvement of instruction but will also focus upon other ways to improve retention by facilitating a positive, personalized relationship between student and professor. In

addition to the traditional role of instructor, faculty will serve in other key roles: mentor, friend, campus liaison, and advisor (Noel, Levitz, Saluri, 1985).

In response to the need for faculty involvement in student success, this paper describes a model in-service training program for assisting faculty members in functioning as academic counselors during a pre-enrollment freshman counseling and advising program or the first stage of academic advisement. The proposed program is designed to sensitize faculty to the diverse academic abilities, interests, and aspirations of entering students. A major objective of the program is to enhance student success by facilitating a better understanding of each student's unique characteristics, thus encouraging a more individualized approach to instruction, mentoring, and academic advisement. Faculty who serve as academic counselors in a freshman counseling and advising program will be better prepared to assist in development of a campus-wide retention program that places special emphasis on student experiences during their critical first six weeks on campus (Noel, Levitz, Saluri).

SELECTION OF ACADEMIC COUNSELORS

Before discussing the in-service training program, it is important to review the criteria used in selecting faculty to serve as academic counselors. Selection of the most qualified faculty members is essential to the success of the pre-entry counseling and advising program; however, strategies for faculty selection and participation in advisement programs have traditionally been

nonexistent or ill conceived (Keller, 1988). Therefore, considerable emphasis should be placed on using criteria that will result in the selection of competent and motivated faculty members.

Four criteria are employed to select faculty to be academic counselors. First, a faculty member must have a strong student orientation and have demonstrated the ability to relate well to students, both academically and personally. Data collected during the preceding school year concerning the faculty member's effectiveness as an academic advisor (Kapraun, Coldren, 1980) can provide considerable insight into the faculty member's suitability to function as academic counselor. Second, a teacher must be genuinely interested in serving as academic counselor. Participation is voluntary and therefore, should reflect an intrinsic motivation. Although a faculty member is reimbursed for serving as academic counselor, the pecuniary benefit should be secondary to a strong sense of commitment to the primary purpose of academic counseling. A third criterion focuses upon a faculty member's willingness to be innovative and flexible. The faculty member serving as academic counselor assumes a role much different from the traditional role of teacher in a group setting. In-depth, one-to-one academic counseling requires a willingness to invest the necessary time and energy to develop the expertise to perform the critical task of academic counseling. Fourth, a faculty member must realize that he is neither expected nor qualified to perform psychological counseling. In summary, the academic counseling process involves in-depth evaluation and discussion of a student's academic abilities and interest in a particular program of study.

COUNSELORS' ORIENTATION CONFERENCE

Once selected, faculty participate in a Counselors' Orientation Conference, a three-to-four-day program designed to provide them with knowledge and skills essential for effective academic counseling. The conference covers four major topics:

- familiarizing the participant with changing student demographics,
- addressing the typical concerns of entering freshmen,
- developing academic counseling skills, and
- reviewing technological applications.

The content of each topic will be briefly examined.

Changing Student Demographics

In familiarizing faculty with demographic changes, three types of information are needed: overview information concerning today's freshmen, an up-to-date institutional summary of salient characteristics pertaining to students currently enrolled at the college or university; and, a review of trends and practices designed to enhance the educational experiences of college students.

Overview information includes a synopsis of the latest research findings pertaining to changes in students as a result of the college experience and the anticipated benefits of a college education (Pascarella, Terenzini, 1991). The implications of these findings are also discussed. Selected readings from How College Affects Students (Pascarella, Terenzini, 1991) and The Undergraduate Experience in America (Boyer, 1987) should serve as key resource documents. The

topic of changing student demographics should highlight projections pertaining to traditional and non-traditional college students such as adult learners, students with disabilities, commuter students, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. Projections and implications can be effectively presented to faculty members through a review of selected chapters from Shaping Higher Education's Future (Levine, 1989) and The Freshman Year Experience (Upcraft, Gardner, 1989). Most institutions of higher learning are involved today in educating a growing number of adult learners; therefore, a discussion of readings which focus on the design of entering programs for adults would be valuable (Schlossberg, Lynch, Chickering, 1988).

The institutional summary of student characteristics is used to reinforce major findings in regard to changing student demographics. This summary should emphasize the implications of trends pertaining to a specific postsecondary institution and should be presented by the chief student affairs officer who is usually well prepared to sensitize faculty (Sandeen, 1991) to the realities and challenges they will encounter in assisting entering freshmen during the pre-enrollment process. The chief student affairs administrator should also stress the importance of collaboration and partnerships between academic and student affairs (Brown, 1990), a prerequisite for the development of comprehensive orientation and transitional programs and services (Tinto) that emphasize social as well as academic dimensions of integration into the university (Pascarella, Terenzini, 1980). The extent of a student's involvement with an institution of higher learning, as defined by Astin (1977, 1984) and

Boyer (1990), determines the likelihood of the student "connecting" at a particular campus and persisting to a degree. The institutional culture, campus environment, and policies and practices of **involving colleges** have been identified; in addition, specific recommendations are made for creating involving colleges (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, 1991), defined as colleges that create bonding relationships with students.

Educational practices designed to enhance the experiences of entering freshmen may encompass topics such as multicultural awareness (Richardson, Skinner, 1991; Pedersen, 1988), learning styles (Kolb, 1985), applications of student development theories (Moore, 1990; Knefelcamp, Widick, Parker, 1978), drug/alcohol education (Doweiko, 1990), and other topics which will be of significance in working with the entering student population. Appropriate speakers and resource materials can be used to insure delivery of pertinent information to academic counselors. Emphasis should be placed on practical applications of the concepts presented.

Preparing to Address Typical Freshmen Questions

The second component includes two types of information: general information and student information. General information is classified as academic or non-academic information.

The academic information focuses upon a review of the admission requirements, academic/career opportunities for the various programs of study, and academic standards pertaining to curricula offered by the colleges. A videotape presentation entitled "Introducing the College/University to Freshmen" summarizes much

of the pertinent information which an entering student should know about the academic structure of the institution. This presentation also provides an excellent overview of the institution for the academic counselors and is used to summarize those presentations pertaining to dissemination of academic information.

Non-academic information is presented by representatives from the Office of Student Affairs. Their information pertains to key support programs and services designed to contribute to the staying environment (Noel, Levitz, Saluri) of the campus. An effective pre-enrollment counseling and advising program should be linked with student programs and services available on campus to address the whole student (Tinto) from the perspective of enhancing social as well as academic development.

Student information is defined as information that is collected and analyzed concerning the academic background of each entering student. This information includes three items: profile of academic abilities, admission profile, and an education planning survey. The profile of academic abilities summarizes a student's standardized test scores, high school grade point average, and placement test scores and recommends entry-level course work relative to English, mathematics, chemistry, and other disciplines where effective course placement is particularly critical to the success of an entering student. The admission profile summarizes the essential information concerning a student's high school academic background and also provides a prediction for college success in verbal and quantitative subject areas. The education planning survey is a self-report instrument that provides considerable insight into a student's

thoughts and perceptions concerning academic/career planning and also assesses a student's study and time management skills. Staff of the Division of Undergraduate Studies at the Pennsylvania State University have provided exemplary leadership (Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, 1984) in their use of the profile of academic abilities, admission profile, education planning survey, and other strategies to assist students in clarifying academic/career goals.

Collected and analyzed over a period of time, data from these three sources can be combined systematically to develop an "early warning system" or estimate of "dropout proneness" (Tinto) for various student populations. Therefore, appropriate interventions can be introduced early enough to improve the retention of high-risk students.

Developing Academic Counseling Skills

The personalization of general and student information for each freshman is the basic objective of the academic counseling process. To perform this vital task, the effective academic counselor must be able to: *interpret test results, evaluate academic preparation* for a particular program, and *communicate* to the student information which will assist in formulation of a realistic academic/career goal.

Various activities are employed in assisting the counselor to develop these essential skills. Initially, a videotape presentation pertaining to the interpretation of the placement test profile summarizes the important issues to be considered when performing a test interpretation, including a review of the latest course placement recommendations relative to English, mathematics,

chemistry, and other core disciplines. Next, each counselor is asked to complete an interview preparation sheet for the student described in a mock counseling folder. Then, each academic counselor presents to other counselors an evaluation of this student's academic preparation for a particular academic program. Through group interaction, counselors critique evaluations and summaries of counseling interviews. Another exercise includes the review of videotaped counseling interviews conducted during the counseling and advising program of the previous summer. The group outlines the positive and negative aspects of each interview and makes specific recommendations for improving the academic counseling process.

Reviewing Technological Applications

Although faculty trained as academic counselors will not have direct responsibility for the in-depth career and personal counseling of students beyond the pre-enrollment counseling and advising program, it is important that they are aware of the latest trends and practices for enhancing student development through use of computers (Johnson, Pyle, 1984). This knowledge, acquired as a result of participation in the Counselors' Orientation Conference, can be used by academic counselors in making appropriate student referrals for in-depth career and personal counseling during the critical freshman year.

Computer uses to facilitate student development are increasing at a rapid pace. Some of the current application areas that should be highlighted in the in-service training program for faculty include: counseling, academic advising (degree audit and academic alert

systems), study skills/tutoring, career development/decision making, job placement, registration, financial aid, special populations, and student activities (Johnson, Pyle). A special emphasis should be placed on examining the roles and functions of student development educators in the year 2000 (Johnson, Pyle). From this perspective, the responsiblity of all educators for the holistic development (cognitive and affective) of students should be addressed. Expanding computer applications that should be reviewed in this regard include: self-assessments in health areas (wellness, alcohol and drugs), self-paced improvement programs for students with learning and physical disabilities, and self-paced writing and learning skills programs (Mills, 1990).

MAXIMIZING PROGRAM IMPACT

As a result of participation in this intensive training program, the selected faculty members are well prepared to assist entering freshmen in developing accurate expectations relative to entry into a program of study. Helping students to clarify academic/career goals by personalizing complex information on programs of study and student support services is a major task of the academic counselor (Kramer, Spencer, 1989). Various individual and group counseling activities should be employed to achieve the overall goal of the pre-entry program--beginning the academic and social integration (Tinto) of entering freshmen into the institution.

The faculty member trained and now experienced as an academic counselor is in an excellent position to make contributions that go beyond assisting students to develop realistic academic/

career goals. Strategies should be pursued to maximize the contributions of faculty members trained as academic counselors in the second stage of academic advisement. (All advising which occurs after the pre-enrollment counseling and advising program is considered to be the second stage of academic advisement.)

First, faculty trained as academic counselors should be employed as instructors in a freshman seminar. This seminar can be developed in content similar to the widely emulated University 101 of the University of South Carolina (Jeweler, 1989) to facilitate the effective transition of entering freshmen to college (Tinto). Ideally, entering freshmen should be assigned to the faculty member who served as their academic counselor in the pre-enrollment program. Therefore, continuity is established and academic progress can be more readily monitored since the counselor is already familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of specific entering freshmen.

Second, those faculty members who have served as academic counselors in the pre-enrollment counseling and advising program should be used as trainers of other faculty advisors. Since faculty members trained as academic counselors have acquired considerable knowledge and skill relative to the academic advisement process, they are in an excellent position to influence the development of effective advising among their peers. An in-service training program sponsored by these faculty will have both credibility and expertise essential for improvement of second stage academic advisement.

Third, the training and development of additional faculty members as academic counselors should be promoted. There is a direct relationship between the number of faculty members involved

and program impact. A rotation of interested faculty can be developed to permit each faculty member to function periodically as both academic counselor and freshman seminar instructor.

Fourth, statements of specific outcomes/objectives should be formulated for the total programmatic effort (Nichols, 1991). Whenever possible, the outcomes should be defined in terms of student and faculty behavioral changes and improvement in student retention rates. The involvement of faculty and staff in determining specific accountability measures is critical to program success.

Fifth, each year an in-depth analysis of the program's impact should be conducted through a comprehensive evaluation system which includes: analysis of retention rates for first-year students; student evaluations of the pre-enrollment counseling and advising program, the freshman year seminar and other key first-year courses; and, assessments of mentoring and academic advisement effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Collection and analysis of appropriate data will greatly enhance managerial decisions concerning modifications to the in-service training program for faculty trained as academic counselors, the *cornerstone* of the two primary stages of academic advisement for a college or university. A well organized and outcomes oriented training program, one component of a comprehensive faculty development program, can do much to improve instructional, academic advisement, and mentoring effectiveness. Such a program sensitizes faculty to the unique qualities and needs of entering

freshmen, thus improving their ability to contribute to student retention in an era of increasingly diverse student populations.

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